

News from the Savannah River Site

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For Immediate Release

Simulated Radiological Release Drill Tests SRS Emergency Response

AIKEN, S.C., (June 20, 2024) – On June 6, Savannah River Site (SRS) personnel proactively prepared for a radiological release and contamination emergency during a Site annual emergency exercise, which involved nearly 250 personnel.

“This exercise is a valuable opportunity for us to train and respond under pressure in a no-fault environment,” said Scott Craft, Environmental Management Operations Safety and Health Area Manager. “This is fantastic way to validate the effectiveness of our emergency response, self-identify improvement areas and demonstrate our commitment to safety.”



Savannah River Site (SRS) firefighters rescue a role-playing SRS employee who was injured from a simulated vehicle crash. Over 250 employees participated in the radiological release exercise.

This year’s emergency scenario unfolded in the Site’s K Area, which is responsible for the removal of plutonium from South Carolina. After a mock thunderstorm microburst developed quickly over the area, a delivery truck lost control and simulated crashing into K Area’s Criticality Control Overpack (CCO) pad. The “crash” resulted in a radiological release from a CCO drum— resulting in several mock injuries, one

simulated fatality, and protective actions issued for the area. SRNS personnel swiftly responded to the release, utilizing personal protective equipment to aid the contaminated and injured individuals, transferring them to off-site medical facilities.

“It’s quite the challenge to provide critical care to an injured patient while ensuring that external medical facilities are comfortable with chemical and radiological hazards,” said Craft. “Success is no accident, and this interaction with multiple off-site medical teams ensures our readiness for any real emergency.”



Doctor’s Hospital staff collaborated with SRS to practice treating and decontaminating an injured patient as part of the emergency exercise. SRS Radiological Protection assisted with contamination control within the facility and provided recommendations on personal protective equipment for medical staff.

The simulation included a coroner, ambulance transports, and contamination control measures. Many SRS personnel participated in the exercise, including SRS Emergency Response Organization (ERO), Site Medical, Protective Force, Law Enforcement, Field Monitoring, Radiological Protection, and the SRS Fire Department.

“We had full participation from outside entities like the Barnwell Coroner, Doctors Hospital, and WellStar MCG Health to make this exercise as real as possible,” said Amber Rodriguez, SRNS Site Drills and Exercise Manager. “Whether an emergency is radiological, chemical, severe weather, security, or a combination of all— safeguarding employees, the public, and the environment will continue to be our top priority.”

SRS Fire Chief Travis Scott commended the coordination between the SRS Fire Department and facility personnel, “Our job requires that we respond to unique hazards on SRS, which makes regularly conducting drills and exercises helpful in ensuring operational preparedness for our first responders.”

This year, SRS incorporated Argonne National Laboratory’s Public Affairs Science and Technology (PAST) Fusion Cell Academy. PAST Fusion Cell is a first-of-its-kind research and training facility aimed at improving all aspects of public affairs pertaining to emergency management. Five Argonne

professionals attended the exercise— with one assisting the intelligence response team, two acting as reporters and one acting as videographer.



SRS firefighters responded to the staged scene outside of K Area’s Criticality Control Overpack pad. They followed an Incident Action Plan to maximize the safety of responders and role-playing victims for effective extraction.

“From a communications standpoint, Argonne was able to pinpoint our limitations and share best practices across the Department of Energy Complex,” said Rodriquez. “They added another layer of realism into this exercise by simulating media, interacting with SRNS executives as press, formulating outside news reports and blasting fake news on social media.”

Each year, SRS performs one graded Site-level emergency preparedness drill, three ERO activation drills, over 40 facility level drills, and several tabletop drills. The type and location of each scenario are determined by a five-year plan that cycles through all areas and potential hazards at the Site.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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